



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION INDICATORS FOR CALIFORNIA ('EPIC') PROJECT

California Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment

Project Overview

Background

As part of the implementation of the California Environmental Protection Agency's (Cal/EPA) *Strategic Vision*^{*}, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment is leading a collaborative effort to develop environmental indicators under the **Environmental Protection Indicators for California** or "**EPIC**" Project. These environmental indicators will provide a means of assessing trends associated with Cal/EPA's mission.

What is an Environmental Indicator?

An environmental indicator is a measure that presents scientifically based information on environmental conditions and trends. An indicator has a significance extending beyond that directly associated with the parameter measured.

Examples include the volume of hazardous wastes generated; annual peak concentrations of a criteria air pollutant; and levels of contaminants in fish tissues.

Environmental indicators as new tools for Cal/EPA

Environmental indicators will support the development and implementation of a "results-based management system" for Cal/EPA. As part of the strategic planning process, environmental indicators will be useful in:

- formulating policy
- allocating resources
- making adjustments to priorities

Scope of EPIC

Environmental indicators within the scope of the EPIC Project are those that:

- Reflect an issue that affects California or reflects a global or transboundary issue of interest to California;
- Relate to the missions of Cal/EPA and its boards, departments and office (i.e., are mission-based indicators); and,
- Measure **pressures** exerted on the environment by human activities, ambient environmental **conditions**, or **effects** on human or ecological health.

First year goal

During the first year, the project is developing a process to identify, select and develop environmental indicators. Using this process, an initial set of indicators will be generated. These will be incorporated into a report (*A Framework for Cal/EPA's Environmental Indicator System*) to be released by August, 2001.

^{*} California Environmental Protection Agency, Office of the Secretary. *Strategic Vision*, July 2000. Posted at www.calepa.ca.gov/Publications/Reports/stratplans/2000.

A Team Effort

Development of the Cal/EPA indicator system involves an open, participatory process with the following collaborators :

- **EPIC Project Staff**, consisting of representatives of the boards and departments of Cal/EPA, other State agencies (most notably the Resources Agency and the Department of Health Services), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency;
- **Interagency Advisory Group**, with policy-level representatives of the same agencies listed above;
- **External Advisory Group**, consisting of non-profit environmental/public interest groups, local government, the private sector, and academia; and,
- **Contractors** assisting in various tasks associated with the project.

Implementation

Project initiation: enlist project staff, contractors and other collaborators; review relevant environmental indicator literature; plan and convene two-day conference (*completed*)

Development of “environmental indicator framework”: identify and organize environmental issues confronting Cal/EPA; establish a process and criteria for identifying, selecting and developing environmental indicators for these issues.

Indicator selection: select appropriate environmental indicators using adopted criteria

Indicator development: using available data, develop environmental indicators

Report preparation: incorporate relevant information into a report (*A Framework for Cal/EPA’s Environmental Indicator System*)

Maintenance of indicator system: solicit and consider public input on the indicator system; evaluate, validate and update indicators; review indicator system to ensure consistency, and to reconcile, with strategic plans

Contact information

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